



## Marysville Adult Education program has final graduation

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2012-06-04 23:25:56



With bittersweet pomp and circumstance, Monday night marked the end of an era for Marysville Adult Education.

After nearly a century of guiding students toward long-awaited achievements, the program's last group of graduates walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. More than 100 students rejoiced with family and friends as they became the class of 2012.

Budget cuts are forcing the closure of the program which opened in 1919. However sad Principal Tim Kelly is to see Marysville Adult Education close its doors, he was clear about one thing — Monday

night's graduation was a celebration.

"I want to remember the years we were able to change lives for tens of thousands of people," he said. "It created more jobs for them and their families. It created more opportunities and doors opening. It created hopefulness."

For a slide show of images from the graduation, go to <http://www.appeal-democrat.com/sections/slideshow/?id=14542063>

Yuba City resident Tom Goudie, 57, should have walked across the stage to receive his high school diploma 40 years ago this month. Instead, he was at boot camp for the U.S. Coast Guard after trading his classroom struggles for military service.

Decades later he decided to give his diploma one more try but found himself struggling again with words of which he couldn't make sense. Then, with the help of his wife and teachers, it was at Marysville Adult Education he discovered he has dyslexia.

Once he knew the cause of his learning troubles, he finished his diploma in four months and posted the highest scores in math and language arts on the exit exam. Both of Goudie's parents, now in their 80s, attended his graduation ceremony.

"It's something I owed them for 40 years," he said. "So it's special."

Goudie was one of 45 students who received a high school diploma on Monday, along with 11 students awarded certificates of completion and 25 who received their General Educational Development certificates. Eleven others graduated from the dental assistant program and 28 were pronounced U.S. citizens.

The graduates said the closure of Marysville Adult Education will be a loss for community residents.

"I think it helps them blossom and become what they were going to be," said Bryan Broadnax. "It's that stepping stone that gets them to the other side."

He had been only 20 units short when he dropped out of high school for what he attributes to laziness. Despite a well-paying job, for years his conscience nagged him about not having a diploma, so when he was laid off three months ago, he decided to go back to school.

Being a student again at the age of 42 was more difficult than he thought.

"It was like a foreign language. The brain is rusty," he said.

Broadnax kept pushing, and when he heard Marysville Adult Education was closing, he kicked into high gear to ensure he wouldn't miss this opportunity again. Diploma now in hand, he plans to enroll at Yuba College in information technology and said he could not be more proud.

"It feels like 500 pounds just lifted off me," he said. "Mary (the school secretary) keeps asking me, are you ever gonna stop smiling?"

Marysville Adult Education was created to offer students a means to obtain diplomas, achieve certifications and take classes in a convenient, affordable and flexible manner, Kelly said.

But its offerings have shrunk in recent years, as budget cuts took their toll. Classes for older adults, tai chi and evening athletic programs eventually were eliminated until all that remained was core classes for GED, high school diplomas, English as a second language and the dental assistant program.

In February, school board members opted to eliminate the remaining \$390,000 in adult education funding as they tried to close the district's \$3 million budget gap.

"Certainly, it is a loss not only to the community but the district," said Superintendent Gay Todd. "We hope once the state gets its financial matters in order, we can restore the program. That is my hope."

The district does not want to leave potential students without resources, but without funding, it doesn't have many options, Todd said. It is working to see if other education agencies can absorb the components.

Those who work in the program have fond memories.

"One of the most unforgettable sights I ever saw was a 54-year-old man dancing in the hallway after he got his GED," said GED examiner Dana Vermillion. "I'll never forget that as long as I live."

Twenty-two years after she left high school to have a baby and get married, Yuba City resident Sarah Potts, 38, wanted to stand as an example to her children that they need to graduate.

None of it would be possible without Marysville Adult Education, which provided a welcoming and inspirational environment as the mother of 10 children pursued something she had put off so long ago, Potts said.

"It refocused me," she said, of her diploma goal. "I wasn't looking for college or a career, but now I am. Because if I can do this, I can do that."

When Vuoch Eng Son, 30, moved to the United States in 2008 from Cambodia, she had only a ninth-grade education, and she hoped her new country would allow her to achieve her dream of becoming a pharmacy technician. First, she had to receive her GED.

"They always pushed me to take the test, but I was so scared," she said. "They pushed me again, again, and then I passed."

She was all smiles Monday as she joined the rest of the class of 2012, and said though she too is disappointed the program is ending, she is grateful that it existed to help her.

"I want to take a picture and send it to Cambodia so my mom can see me on Facebook," she said. "My dad will be so proud."

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